

STRATEGY 2023-28



**Western Port
Biosphere**

Strategic Plan
2023 – 2028



Acknowledgement of Country

The Western Port Biosphere Reserve Foundation acknowledges the Bunurong / Boon Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation as the traditional custodians of the land on which we live and work.

First Nations peoples are the original caretakers of the land and waterways and hold the truth, the stories, and the knowledge necessary for creating a sustainable future. We recognise their continued connection to the land and waters.

We support the wishes, sentiment and aspirations expressed by First Nations people in the 'Uluru Statement from the Heart', which align with our values related to empowering people and belonging together. These values support participation and greater connection for all Australians to create a better future in harmony with our natural environment, which has been nurtured and cared for by indigenous communities for over 60,000 years.

We pay our respects to the Elders past, present, and emerging. We recognise that indigenous sovereignty was never ceded.

Always was, always will be, Aboriginal Land.

Message from the **Chair & the CEO**

Wominjeka.

We're pleased to present the Western Port Biosphere Reserve Foundation's Strategic Plan for 2023-2028.

The twentieth anniversary of UNESCO's designation of the Mornington Peninsula and Western Port Biosphere Reserve provides an opportunity to reflect on the Foundation's achievements over two decades and to learn from some of the challenges we have encountered along the way. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that there will be even greater challenges in the years ahead given the scientific modelling that predicts dire outcomes for our ecosystems and economy if we fail to act now.

In the face of these predictions, this Strategic Plan provides the platform for our approach for the next five years and beyond as we confront the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change. Never has the Biosphere model of 'learning places for sustainable development' been more relevant, nor the need for them as sites that foster environmental education, public awareness, and capacity building at local, national, and international levels been more important.

This Plan, initially developed by the board and staff has involved consultation with our members, partners and other key stakeholders to refine and simplify the core elements. It defines our purpose and vision for the Reserve and the Foundation and demonstrates how they align to those of UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

The Plan lays out the strategic priorities for what we want to achieve leading up to 2030, and a framework for how our work will be structured. While building on previous iterations, it more explicitly emphasises the need for working in partnerships to achieve the best possible outcomes. It embraces the insights and experiences of first nations peoples and underlines the need for a scientific evidence base for decision making.

The strategic priorities, guiding principles and the three pillars of our work will inform our Annual Business Plans and other key documents for the coming five years, while our 2030 Outlook provides aspirational statements of what we are working towards by the end of the decade. Our priorities are consistent with those laid out in the Foundation's Constitution and Charter and those articulated in UNESCO's current strategy document – the Lima Action Plan.

We thank everyone involved in the development of the Strategic Plan for their input, knowledge and enthusiasm and look forward to reporting on our progress towards its implementation.

The twentieth anniversary also marks an occasion to thank the many people who came before us and who have worked or volunteered for the Foundation in the past two decades.

Without their dedication and commitment, we would not be in the position we are now – having recently been informed by UNESCO that following our second ten-year periodic review we have met the 'criteria of the Statutory Framework of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves'. This was not an automatic outcome and represents a considerable achievement for both the current team and its predecessors.



Jo McCoy
Chair



Mel Barker
CEO

About us



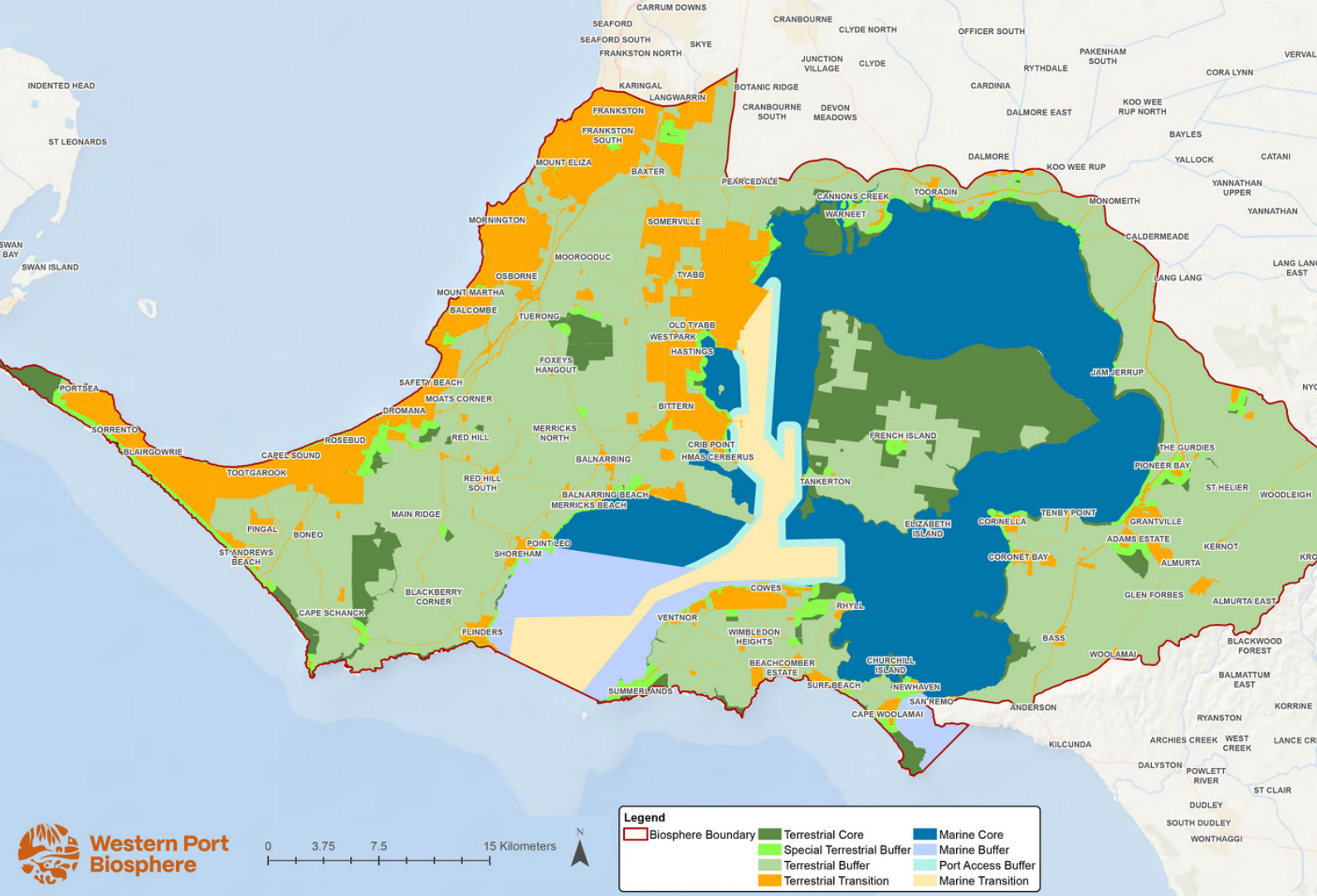
The Mornington Peninsula and Western Port Biosphere Reserve (the Reserve) is one of five biosphere reserves across Australia and one of 748 covering 134 countries worldwide. Following years of campaigning by the local community and with the endorsement of the State and Federal Governments, the Reserve was designated by UNESCO in 2002 while the not-for-profit Mornington Peninsula and Western Port Biosphere Reserve Foundation that supports it, was established in December 2003.

The Reserve was recognised for its unique natural assets including its world-renowned Ramsar wetlands of salt marsh, mudflats and mangroves that are home to over 20,000 migratory birds.

The land surrounding Western Port is home to many of Australia's iconic native species including kangaroos, koalas, platypus as well as lesser-known species such as southern brown bandicoots, rare orchids and grass trees.

Home to the Bunurong/Boon Wurrung people for tens of thousands of years, the Reserve now supports a growing population in the hundreds of thousands across five local government areas - the cities of Casey and Frankston plus the Bass Coast, Cardinia, and Mornington Peninsula Shires as well as French Island.





UNESCO Biosphere Reserves are divided into three zones – **Core, Buffer and Transition** depending on their level of protection and the activities undertaken within them. We determine our **advocacy approach** according to these zones.

WHY & HOW

Our Purpose (why we are here):

To inspire a positive future by connecting people and nature today

Our Vision (what we want to be):

A place where the natural environment and human culture flourish as one

Our Mission (what we do):

The Biosphere Foundation champions approaches that focus on biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. We link people and resources to deliver projects that benefit the community and the natural environment.

Our Mission is informed by an understanding of Indigenous knowledge, culture and practices and the best available science.

Our work is aligned to three pillars which jointly address the WNBR strategic objectives and help us fulfil our purpose, vision and mission.

We scope and develop new projects under these pillars and use a select group of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the basis upon which we measure and report on project objectives and outcomes.

Climate action



Environment Preservation and Restoration



Sustainable Development



Our Mission is enabled (how we do it) through:

Empowering our people - staff, directors, committee members and volunteers

Building alliances and partnerships that support our objectives

Strengthening our administration and governance to ensure our ongoing relevance and viability.

These actions collectively assist us to contribute to the achievement of three further SDGs.



Our 2030 Outlook

Based on our mission, strategic priorities and principles, by 2030, the Reserve and the Foundation will be in a position where:

The Western Port Biosphere Reserve

- Showcases how sustainable development works on the ground, demonstrating environmental outcomes and economic growth that benefit the community
- Hosts healthy habitats on both land and sea that support vulnerable and critically endangered species
- Is criss-crossed by strategic biolinks that connect remnant vegetation and formerly isolated plant and animal communities
- Contains expanded saltmarsh, seagrass and mangrove communities on rehabilitated coastal land
- Is recognised for its outstanding ecotourism opportunities and the positive impact they have on the local economy.

The Western Port Biosphere Foundation

- Has strong partnerships with local businesses, corporations and philanthropists ensuring its ongoing financial security
- Is recognised as the umbrella environmental and sustainable development organisation in the region and the partner of choice for large-scale, high-impact projects
- Accesses world renowned scientific expertise in disciplines such as ecology, marine biology, climate science, environmental economics and sustainability
- Works with schools, universities and groups across the Reserve to educate the community
- Provides highly regarded advice to land and water managers on plans for future strategies – in keeping with the Strategic Framework for Western Port
- Supports key stakeholders to apply the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the objectives of the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves in their local plans and strategies.

We will measure the success of this plan against these statements in keeping with our core values below.



Strategic Priorities

To help achieve our VISION, over the next five years, we will:

- Tackle climate change and biodiversity loss within the Biosphere Reserve
- Leverage the global significance of the Biosphere Reserve and the UNESCO brand to inspire action
- Attract investment to ensure the long-term health of the Biosphere Reserve

Guiding Principles

- Advocacy will build awareness and the Foundation's reputation as a credible authority on the Reserve and its future
- A sustainable business model and best practice governance are key to our continued success
- We will achieve better outcomes through strategic partnerships and collaboration with local first nations representatives, government agencies, scientific and research institutions, and business and community groups.



Our **VALUES**

Our core values are based on those of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

Champion **life**

The “positivity” value

We celebrate people and nature

We shine a light on positive examples of people and nature thriving together. We believe that people’s quality of life and the health and diversity of nature are inextricably linked. People are a part of their environments which in turn have been shaped by local cultures. We celebrate and advance culture, nature and the economy together.

Empower **people**

The “participation” value

We enable participation

We are a movement of people building a future we can trust. We know that people are most powerful when they are informed, inspired, and have the tools to make change happen. The only way to build a future that is self-sufficient, secure and happy is to help people believe it is possible and help them to make it happen.

Model **solutions**

The “innovation” value

We explore new ways everyday

We explore new ways of living that solve global challenges.

Our solutions are built on a strong scientific foundation and understanding of local cultures, traditions and ecology, which we translate it into actions everyday. This allows us to make the most of local expertise and live in a way that tackles global challenges. By doing this, we model the future we want to see.

Belong **together**

The “collective” value

We are part of something bigger.

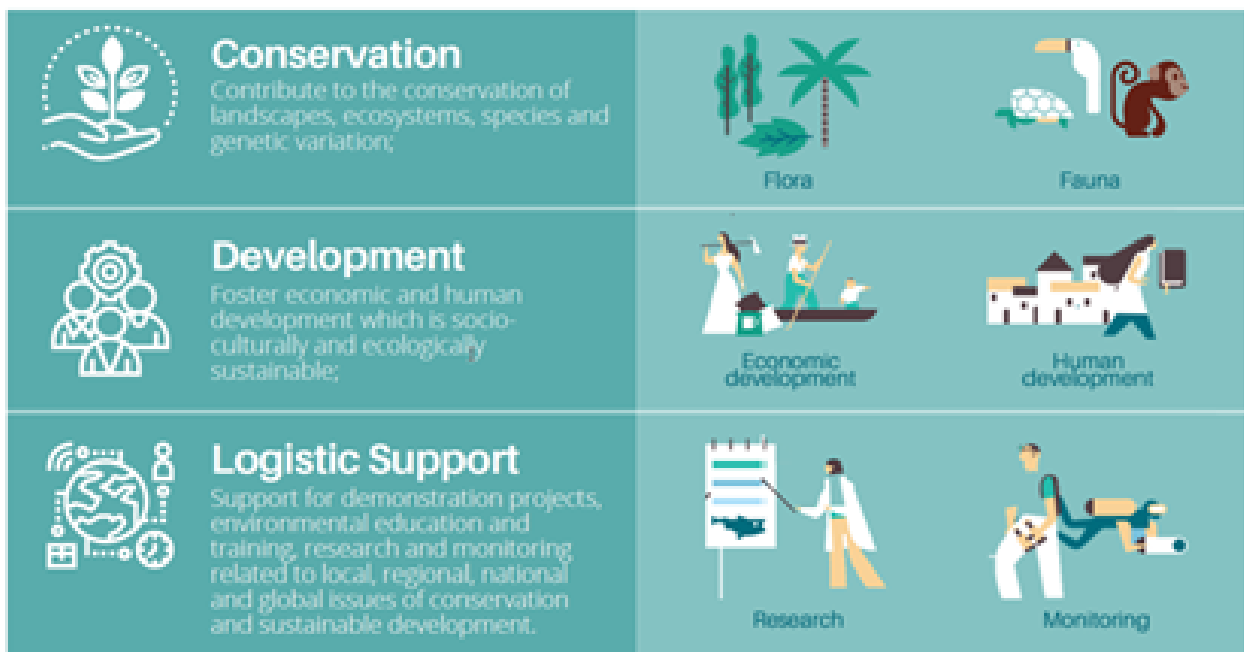
Our success depends on the strength of the relationships we create. It’s these powerful connections that mean we can achieve outcomes together that we could not achieve alone. Connecting people across disciplines, cultures and borders. Reconnecting people to each other, and to nature. Connecting the values and heritage from our past with hopes we have for our future.



World Network of Biosphere Reserves

All Biosphere reserves are 'learning places for sustainable development' promoting local solutions to global challenges. They integrate three main "functions":

- Conservation of biodiversity and cultural diversity
- Economic development that is socio-culturally and environmentally sustainable
- Logistic support, underpinning development through research, monitoring, education and training



The World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) is a dynamic, interactive network of Reserves in all continents, covering all major ecosystem types. It promotes collaboration and international cooperation through the exchange of experiences and knowledge, capacity-building and the promotion of best practices among Biosphere Reserves.

Strategic Objectives of World Biosphere Network

- Conserve biodiversity, **restore and enhance ecosystem services**, and foster the sustainable use of natural resources
- Contribute to **building sustainable, healthy and equitable societies**, economies and thriving human settlements in harmony with the biosphere
- **Facilitate biodiversity and sustainability** science, education for sustainable development and capacity building
- Support **mitigation and adaptation to climate change** and other aspects of global environmental change

